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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002881

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [US](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: MUASHER SEEKS CLARIFICATION ON POINTS FROM  
PRESIDENT'S EXCHANGE WITH SHARON ON GAZA

REF: STATE 84066

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.5 (b) (d)

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SUMMARY  
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1. (S) Foreign Minister Muasher told the Charge April 15 that the President's April 14 statement with Israeli PM Sharon on the Gaza disengagement plan in essence closes off negotiations on return of refugees, kills the Arab peace initiative, attempts to change the status of the West Bank and Gaza from occupied to disputed territory, and prejudices the boundaries of a future Palestinian state. Muasher asked for public clarification from the U.S. on these points. Muasher was upset that the President's exchange with Sharon did not take into account the key points Jordanians made during recent consultations with the U.S., particularly on the need for only "minor" adjustments to the 1967 cease-fire line as a future border. END SUMMARY

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CHARGE: GAZA DISENGAGEMENT AN OPPORTUNITY  
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2. (S) Charge and PolCouns delivered to Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher April 15 ref points on Israel's Gaza disengagement plan and the exchange of letters between the President and PM Sharon. Charge emphasized that an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and some West Bank settlements represents a strategic opportunity to leverage progress toward the President's vision of a two-state solution via the roadmap. The President also had made clear that final status issues were for the parties to negotiate, but that certain realities would have to be taken into account.

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MUASHER: "IT'S TERRIBLE"  
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3. (S) Muasher said he had read the exchange of letters between the President and Sharon very carefully, and was still upset. "You say that you are not prejudging the outcome (of final status negotiations), but you are," he declared. Muasher said that it would be impossible for him or other moderate Arabs to defend this policy either with the Arab street or in the Arab Summit meeting. Jordan, he said, had issued a mild statement -- "neither positive nor negative" -- only because the King is due in Washington next week. The exchange of letters, he argued, closes off negotiations on refugees, rejects the Arab Beirut Summit initiative, asserts that the West Bank and Gaza are "disputed territories," and prejudices the borders of a future Palestinian state.

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NEED CLARIFICATION  
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4. (S) Addressing the specifics of the letters, Muasher said that the U.S. reference to the 1949 armistice lines -- rather than the 1967 cease-fire line -- endorsed the Israeli assertion that the West Bank and Gaza are "disputed" not "occupied" territories. He asked that the U.S. publicly clarify this point. Jordan received in 1991, Muasher stated, a letter from then-Secretary of State James Baker stating that the USG considered the West Bank and Gaza to be occupied territories, and that the U.S. would not prejudice the outcome of final status negotiations. "Is this now obsolete? Do American commitments have time limits?"

5. (S) Muasher said the sentence in the President's letter pledging the U.S. to "do its utmost to prevent any attempt by anyone to impose any other plan" kills the Beirut Summit initiative. Muasher said that, before the April 14 White House statements, there had been agreement to hold an Arab League Summit in Tunis May 8-9, "but I'm not sure there will be a Summit now." The Charge responded that the sentence in the President's letter referred not to the Arab initiative, which is completely consistent with the roadmap, but to any attempt to impose a plan other than the President's two-state solution. Muasher said that, if the sentence is not meant to discourage the Arab initiative, the U.S. needed to make an explicit public statement to that effect to counter

misperception.

16. (S) Muasher argued that the U.S. also needs to define exactly what territorial concessions it anticipates in the West Bank. "We need to know that you will not accept a Palestinian state on 50 percent of the West Bank." Such a rump state would be untenable, and would kill any possibility of a viable two-state solution. He said he feared that Sharon had just won a diplomatic coup, achieving with the President's assurances two statements he had made to King Abdullah at their last meeting in Israel: "no to the Arab initiative, and no to the roadmap."

COMMENT

17. (S) Muasher was agitated by the substance of the exchange of letters and seemed to be overreaching -- especially with his fear that the letters eclipsed the Arab initiative. He was also upset that Jordanian efforts had not led to more significant textual changes -- particularly the insertion of the words "limited" or "minor" in references to deviations from the 1967 line. Despite Muasher's initial negative reaction, he and King Abdullah can be expected to try to put the best spin possible from their perspective on the President's exchange with Sharon during the King's U.S. trip next week.

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HALE